

Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub – Lead Dr Michele Lawty-Jones

Background

The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub was established mid-2015, as the executive to the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board, now Skills and Employment Advisory Panel (SAP). The Hub is a strategic unit, gathering local labour market intelligence to identify skills and employment priorities, which are articulated in the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and Technical Education Vision. The Hub works with both business and providers against 4 key strategic themes: Future Workforce, Skilled and Productive Workforce, Inclusive Workforce and Informed Approach.

Performance

Current Activity

A key focus has been the impact of COVID-19 on the business and people of Lancashire. Headlines regarding activity since the last LEP Board are provided below, by the themes of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework. To note, the framework refresh is to be approved at the LEP Board (in December 2020) and the delivery plan and allied monitoring and evaluation framework will be used to formulate a dashboard for future programme updates.

Future Workforce: The final position for the performance of the Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN) and Careers Hub against the Gatsby Benchmarks (quality of careers provision) has been received for the last academic year (ending August 2020). As expected, performance against Benchmark 5 (employer encounters) and Benchmark 6 (experiences of the workplace) dipped due COVID-19 – this has affected performance nationally as employers are unable to go into schools and young people have been unable to undertake visits.

Work is underway by the Careers Hub team, working with U-Explore and Learn Live to develop virtual employer encounters and experiences to mitigate the risk and ensure that the aspirations of young people continue to be boosted – Princes Trust research indicates that 49% of young people think it will now be hard to get a job on leaving education and 47% think that missed time in education will put them at a disadvantage for years to come.

	Performance against BM5			Performance against BM6		
	Target	Mar 2020	Aug 2020	Target	Mar 2020	Aug 2020
EAN (all areas outside of Careers Hub)	70	79.5	62	55	65.5	57
Blackpool Opportunity Area	75	92	77	60	62	46
Careers Hub (Blackpool, Burnley, Pendle)	75	97	73	60	80	74

Average Benchmark Achievement: Lancashire EAN – 4.8, Lancashire Careers Hub – 5.6, against the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks. Both are above the national average – 3.6 and 4.7 respectively.

The Lancashire Careers Hub was officially launched at a virtual Careers Hub Conference on the 13th October. The event attracted over 160 delegates including Head Teachers, Senior Leadership Team members from educational institutions, Career Leaders, Enterprise Advisers (volunteer business leaders) and partners. This included the launch of the 'Can Do' guide by the Chief Executive of the Careers and Enterprise Company, providing insight to national best practice taking place in a virtual environment.

The first phase of delivery of T Levels (technical equivalent to A Levels) is now live, with the four early adopter colleges in Lancashire having recruited around 150 learners in total to Digital, Education & Childcare and Construction T Levels, with the majority recruiting to target. Colleges are confident in the calibre of young people they have recruited to the courses and although most Industry Placements are planned to start next spring, there are discussions taking place already with employers about potential for some experience to be virtual.

The Technical Education Steering Group has agreed the plan for the second phase of the Gatsby Foundation funded project in Lancashire which runs until December 2021. T Level related CPD is now being planned for the academic year. T Level Routeway Networks, consisting of technical education leads from colleges, for Digital, Construction, Engineering & Manufacturing, Health & Science and Education & Childcare continue to be held remotely, with good engagement. Sharing of practice is already underway from those colleges who have recruited to T Levels this year and who ran transition courses last year.

The Skills Hub continue to support the collaborative FE and HE bid for an Institute of Technology, aligned with the LEP's growth pillars, and delivering predominantly Level 4 & 5 higher technical qualifications. The deadline for proposals is 14th December.

Skilled and Productive Workforce: The Lancashire Redundancy Task Force established with partners, including DWP/Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service and the accountable body of the 'Skills Support for the Workforce' programme, The Growth Company, as of the end of September, had made contact with 82 companies, with support being provided to 21. There are ongoing conversations with a number of those businesses who are still in the process of consultation.

Inclusive Workforce: By the end of November all of the programmes operating under the Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund in Lancashire will have started recruitment and/or delivery. Combined, the projects aim to boost the digital skills of 389 individuals – to date 149 have been recruited. Two of the first programmes to get underway, and provide innovative learning using alternative methods of training to allow adults to boost their skills and access digital roles, included IN4.0 Talent Academy (IN4.0 Group) and DEEPer – a partnership of E4All, CB Partners and Magma Digital. The first cohort of IN4.0 Talent Academy graduates have completed the delivery and are now being supported into jobs. By clicking the links, you can hear from some of cohort one on why they signed up to the programme and how they have found the programme or listen to Joel's experience working with an employer to support and develop the business whilst gaining valuable work experience and professional insight.

The success of the Fast Track Fund has attracted attention from other government departments. A further £1.5million from the Department for Education (DfE) has been secured over the summer. The LDSP, GMCA and DCMS are now working with the DfE on a Digital Bootcamps pilot that extends the current work of the Fast Track Fund and will influence the future shape of the National Skills Fund.

Cross cutting: The www.skillsforwork.info microsite was launched at the end of June. The site was developed in direct response to COVID-19 and brings together skills and employment offers from over 50 partners for Lancashire residents. The site has had 12,895 page views to date, with 2,245 clicks through to external partner/provision websites. This includes 2,847 so far in November, with 675 clicks through. The microsite continues to be promoted through regular slots on Radio Lancashire, the 'Skills Up' campaign targeted at 16-24 year olds, a social media campaign and through partner websites.

There are now 97 businesses registered to the Lancashire Skills Pledge <https://www.lancshireskillshub.co.uk/lancashire-skills-pledge/>, with 68 of those businesses actively involved in the delivery of 149 pledge activities. Promotion of the Lancashire Skills

Pledge dipped during the first lockdown, but a refreshed plan is now in place with a celebration event planned to rebuild momentum.

A summary position of the ESF programme has been compiled, providing the position at the end of September in regard to outputs achieved since the beginning of the programme in early 2017 from projects. This is against a portfolio of projects allocated £98m. The Skills Hub has strategic oversight of the programme and brings together projects through the Adults Skills Forum, Employer Skills Forum and the Youth Steering Group – the forums aim to ensure that ESF provision is complementary, targeted at areas of need (in-line with labour market intelligence) and supports individuals up the Lancashire Skills Escalator and into sustained employment. To note, the DWP Managing Authority is responsible for contract management.

Beneficiaries	Outputs and Outcomes achieved to September 2020
Young People	Supported 5,683 young people who are at risk of or NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), with 2,954 moving into a positive destination
Unemployed or Inactive Adults	Supported 18,764 adults, with 6,318 moving into a positive destination
Employers	Engaged with 4,129 businesses, upskilling 11,425 employees

The key risk associated with ESF funds and ESIF funds more generally is the transition to the proposed domestic programme – the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, of which there is very little detail yet available from Government.

Informed Approach: The Skills and Economic Intelligence Officer has been tracking available data in regard to the impact of COVID-19 and sharing this with partners through the Skills Hub COVID-19 Stakeholder Forums to ensure that skills and employment provision is flexed in accordance with need.

Stephen van Rooyen (EVP and CEO, UK and Europe at Sky) has been announced as the chair of the new national Skills and Productivity Board. The work of the Skills and Productivity Board will be carried out by a panel of five leading skills and labour market economists, supported by Department for Education (DfE) officials. It is intended that the Local Skills Reports published by local LEP Skills Advisory Panels will complement and add to the national evidence for the Skills and Productivity Board. The DfE have only this month published the final guidance regarding the proposed Local Skills Reports. The requirement to produce a Local Skills Report by the end of this financial year, however has not changed. The refresh of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework will support the production of the Lancashire Local Skills Report.

The consultation has been completed on the refresh of the Lancashire Skills and Employment strategic Framework and the framework reviewed accordingly. A separate paper is provided on this, with view to the framework being approved for publication in January.

Risks

A new Single Portfolio Risk Register for the combined programmes has been created, which can be found at Appendix M to the main report.